The title of this chapter is drawn from a phrase used by Latinos in New York City to describe the spatial geography of the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities in that city. In *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Arlene Davila reports the Mexican community in New York as being “consistently described by Puerto Rican residents as a self-contained group, with whom they lived ‘juntos pero no revueltos’ (together but not mixed). Mexicans and Puerto Ricans live side by side in El Barrio, yet Mexicans are nowhere to be found in Julia’s Jam, or La Palma Night club, or in the pages of *Siempre*, whereas Puerto Ricans were entirely absent from Salon Cinco Dancing Lounge, or the pages of *La Voz de Mexico*” (p. 155).

The construction of these ethnic boundaries, Davila writes, “has been accompanied by tensions between Mexican and Puerto Rican populations, traced to their different histories, citizenship status, and/or self-conception as residents, racialized minorities, or temporary immigrants” (pp. 20–21). However, the ‘Puerto Ricans’ colonial status and history of racialization in the city also renders them a racialized minority closer to African Americans than to other Latino groupings in the city’s racial and ethnic hierarchy, a position increasingly shared by Dominicans” (p. 18).

In contrast, the ever-growing Mexican immigrant population in New York has been accompanied by an image of them “as a relatively homogenous community of vulnerable workers, striving to maintain their identity as ‘good immigrants’ by working hard, keeping their cultural traditions, and maintaining their transnational connections back home.

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1 This essay reflects an initial attempt at exploring the contested meaning of race and racialization among the Latino population. For a more recent discussion of these issues see: Tomas Almaguer, “Race, Racialization, and Latino Populations” in Daniel HoSang, Oneka Bennett, and Laura Pulido, Eds. *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).
This dominant picture echoes the discourses through which Mexican leaders have maneuvered anti-immigrant sentiments by presenting themselves as worthy and hard-working immigrants” (p. 156).

This positioning by the Mexican community, Davila maintains, helps “to establish the relative value, achievement, and hard work of Mexicans and other recent immigrants when compared to the ‘privileges’ of citizenship afforded to Puerto Ricans... In New York City’s hierarchy of Latinidad, for instance, to distance oneself from the lowest ranked racial/ethnic groups in the city is to estrange oneself from Puerto Ricans and, increasingly, Dominicans. These two groups are considered to be lazy, uneducated, loud, less ‘cultured’ as compared to the more cultured, hard working, and ethical Mexicans, a discourse positioning them as the premier ‘good immigrant’ and prospective model citizen” (p. 171).

Evidence of this self-positioning can be found in the Mexican newspaper *El Dario*, which proclaimed: “We Mexicans are hard workers and don't depend on welfare as do Dominicans...many Mexicans are deported because they are illegal. Each month, Dominicans are deported because they've been jailed for selling drugs, committing robberies, crimes and fraud. We are humble and respectful of our neighbors, Dominicans play radio out loud without caring about their neighbors” (pp. 171–72).

Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, are not often lost for words in characterizing the Mexican community in that city. For instance, Davila observes that Herman Badillo, the Puerto Rican chairman of the board of trustees at the City University of New York and unsuccessful candidate for mayor in 2001, conveyed the not-too-uncommon view that Mexicans “‘came from the hills,’ from countries with little tradition of education, and were mostly short and straight haired Indians. These racist comments,” Davila notes, “exposed stereotypes of Mexicans as less educated or unsophisticated ‘newcomers,’ as opposed to the ‘urban savviness’ of Puerto Ricans. In this case, it is the ‘seniority’ of one Latino group over the other that is deployed to maintain the ‘traditional/modern binary,’ although this binary is also maintained by the politics of citizenship that permeates relations between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans” (p. 173).

Davila's invocation of the “traditional/modern binary” to characterize key aspects of these ethnic differences draws directly from the collaborative comparative study by ethnographers Nicolas De Genova and Ana Ramos-Zayas. In their fascinating book *Latino Crossing: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship* (New York: Routledge, 2003), De Genova and Ramos-Zayas invoke the notions of a discreet “civility” to characterize the Mexican community in Chicago and an assertive